



# SAFETY DIRECTOR BULLETIN



## SCHOOL BUS DRIVERS & SCHOOL BUS AIDES TRAINING REQUIREMENTS N.J.A.C. 6A:27-11.3 & NJSA 18A:39-19.2

New Jersey Administrative Code requires that all employers of school bus drivers and school bus aides ensure that they are properly trained in all of the functions necessary for them to successfully perform their duties. Those duties include safe driving practices, as well as student care and discipline. This applies regardless of whether the school bus drivers and aides are employed by a local board of education, a coordinating transportation services agency (CTSA), or a school transportation contractor. Local boards of education must ensure that all CTSA's, school transportation contractors, or other school districts acting as a host comply with these training requirements.

Training must include all subjects itemized in the administrative code governing student transportation, as well as any specialized information a driver or aide might need based upon the students they transport on their school bus routes and the characteristics and conditions of the roadways on which they travel. Employers must make sure that their drivers and aides receive this instruction prior to beginning work on a new school bus route. In addition, they should regularly provide their drivers and aides with training updates, reminders when a refresher is needed, and new information when a new student is added to an existing bus route.

Employers must administer a safety education program for all permanent and substitute drivers and aides twice per calendar year.

### State Training Regulations: N.J.A.C. 6A:27-11.3 Training

- (a) Employers shall ensure that all school bus drivers and school bus aides are properly trained for the functions of their positions.
- (b) Employers shall administer a safety education program for all permanent and substitute drivers and aides. At a minimum, the training shall include:
1. Student management and discipline;
  2. School bus accident and emergency procedures;
  3. Conducting school bus emergency exit drills;
  4. Loading and unloading procedures;
  5. School bus stop loading zone safety;
  6. Inspecting the school vehicle for students left on board at the end of a route; and
  7. The use of a student's education records, including the employee's responsibility to ensure the privacy of the student and his or her records, if applicable.
- (c) In addition to the training requirements in (b) above, employers shall administer to school bus drivers a safety education program that includes defensive driving techniques and railroad crossing procedures.

### Training for Drivers and Aides of Special Needs Students

Additionally, school bus drivers and school bus aides who transport special needs students, or drivers who may substitute on a route transporting special needs students, must be trained in the specific needs of the students on board that route. This includes the handling of special requirements, such as wheelchairs and child seats, operation of wheelchair lifts and wheelchair tie-downs, and any special requirements in the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP). The driver and aide should be made aware of any special environmental considerations necessary for the students (i.e., temperature or noise level on the school bus). If a student's medical or psychological condition could change or be impacted by anything during the bus ride, the school bus driver and aide should be made aware of this, and be trained in both recognizing this change and what needs to be done, if anything, in reaction to this change.

In accordance with NJSA 18A:39-19.2, the New Jersey Department of Education has developed a training program for school bus drivers and school bus aides on appropriate procedures for interacting with students with special needs. Employers of school bus drivers and bus aides in New Jersey are required to ensure the drivers/aides view this training video on proper procedures for interacting with students with special needs. The training can be accessed here: [School Bus Driver/Aide Training for Interacting with Students with Special Needs](#).

Both school bus drivers and school bus aides are considered to be school officials who have legitimate educational interest to the parts of a student's record related to transportation without parental consent, including the student's IEP, under the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. section 1232g. Any training provided to drivers and aides who have access to this information should include proper use of these records and the drivers' and aides' responsibility to ensure the privacy of the student.

School district child study teams should readily provide the school transportation office with any information pertaining to the student that is necessary in planning for the student's transportation. The student's school bus driver and school bus aide, if applicable, as well as any substitute drivers or aides, should be given any information relative to the student which will be necessary to ensure the student's safety on the bus ride. These individuals should be trained in both the use of and reactions needed to the information, as well as district privacy policies.

### **[N.J.A.C. 6A:27-12.1 General requirements](#)**

**(j)** School bus drivers and aides shall be considered under the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. § 1232g, to be school officials who have a legitimate educational interest to parts of a student's record relating to transportation, without parental consent.

Legitimate educational interest may be applicable whenever a school official needs to review an education record to fulfill his or her professional responsibility. This is defined for school bus drivers and aides as information needed to receive proper training and ensure informed actions to safely transport the student and any other students on the bus.

School bus drivers and aides shall receive training in the use of a student's education records and their responsibility to ensure the privacy of the student and his or her records.

### **[The Role of Good Communication in the Transportation of Special Needs Students](#)**

The sharing of information is vitally important in the transportation of special needs students, as well as training of school bus drivers and school bus aides who will work with these students. District child study teams **must** share any information that is needed to ensure the safe transportation of their classified students with the district transportation office.

Transportation office staff need to know the specific needs of each child so that they can plan bus routes that meet those needs. For example, if noises agitate a student, that student should not be placed on a route that includes other students who call out or act out. The training of school bus drivers and bus aides can be enhanced by the input of students' classroom teachers and classroom aides, the school nurse, and the students' parents, along with the child study team. It is important that these lines of communication exist during the planning of any transportation staff training and remain open throughout the entirety of providing that student transportation.

[MSI NOW](#) offers School Bus Driver Training and School Bus Aide Training that meets the requirements of the regulatory requirements discussed in this document. Both training programs are available on-demand and can be taken individually or in a group setting. Please review the [MSI NOW Access Instructions](#) and [MSI NOW Recording Group Training](#) to access the courses. If you have any questions, please call the MSI Helpline at 866-661-5120.

Additionally, the [New Jersey Department of Education](#) offers the [School Bus Driver and School Bus Aide FAQ \(pg. 3-6\)](#)

Source: [New Jersey Department of Education](#)